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ABSTRACT

To make the most of a library, read and read and read. Here's a sure remedy for the television habit: pile a stack of library books on the television set and next time, instead of turning on a program, reach for a book. Some people limit themselves to reading current bestsellers, but the library is full of yesterday's bestsellers which are still compelling today. Learn to use the card catalog; this is where any book can be found. Learn to use the stacks; unknown books will turn up that are exactly what is needed. Learn to know the reference librarian. Learn to use "The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature." It is a guide to the latest information on any subject of interest. Four personal hints are: (1) take full notes when using magazines; (2) ask about the availability of reprographic machines; (3) keep a small notebook of identification numbers of frequently used books; and (4) learn how to use the reference books. The library can give help on any subject. Here are a few ideas for fun and rewarding library projects: trace family roots, find out what famous person slept nearby, cook a Polynesian feast, or take up photography. (DC)

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HOW TO USE A LIBRARY
POWER OF THE PRINTED WORD

by

James A. Michener

International Paper Company

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How to use a library

By James A. Michener

International Paper asked Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist James A. Michener, author of "Tales of the South Pacific," "Hawaii," "Centennial" and "Chesapeake," to tell how you can benefit from the most helpful service in your community.

You're driving your car home from work or school. And something goes wrong. The engine stalls out at lights, holds back as you go to pass.

It needs a tune-up—and soon. Where do you go? The library.

You can take out an auto repair manual that tells step-by-step how to tune up your make and model.

Or your tennis game has fallen off. You've lost your touch at the net. Where do you go?

The library—for a few books on improving your tennis form.

"The library!" you say. "That's where my teacher sends me to do—ugh—homework."

Unfortunately, I've found that's exactly the way many people feel. If you're among them, you're denying yourself the easiest way to improve yourself, enjoy yourself and even cope with life.

It's hard for me to imagine what I would be doing today if I had not fallen in love, at the ripe old age of seven, with the Melinda Cox Library in my hometown of Doylestown, Pennsylvania. At our house, we just could not afford books. The books in that free library would change my life dramatically.

Who knows what your library can open up for you?

My first suggestion for making the most of your library is to do what I did: read and read and read. For pleasure—and for understanding.

How to kick the TV habit

If it's TV that keeps you from cultivating this delicious habit, I can offer a sure remedy. Take home from the library a stack of books that might look interesting.

Pile them on the TV set. Next time you are tempted to turn on a program you really don't want to see, reach for a book instead.

Over the years, some people collect a mental list of books they mean to read. If you don't have such a list, here is a suggestion. Take from the library some of the books you might have enjoyed dramatized on TV, like Remarque's "All Quiet on the Western Front," Clavell's "Shōgun," Tolkien's "The Hobbit," or Victor Hugo's "Les Misérables."

If you like what you read, you can follow up with other satisfying books by the same authors.

Some people in their reading limit themselves to current talked-about best sellers. Oh, what they miss! The library is full of yesterday's best sellers; and they still make compelling reading today. Some that I've enjoyed: A. B. Guthrie's "The Big Sky," Carl Van Doren's "Benjamin Franklin," Mari Sandoz's "Old Jules," and Norman Mailer's "The Naked and the Dead."

How do you find these or any other books you're looking for? It's easy—with the card catalog.

Learn to use the card catalog

Every time I go to the library—and I go more than once a week—I invariably make a beeline to the card catalog before anything else. It's the nucleus of any public library.

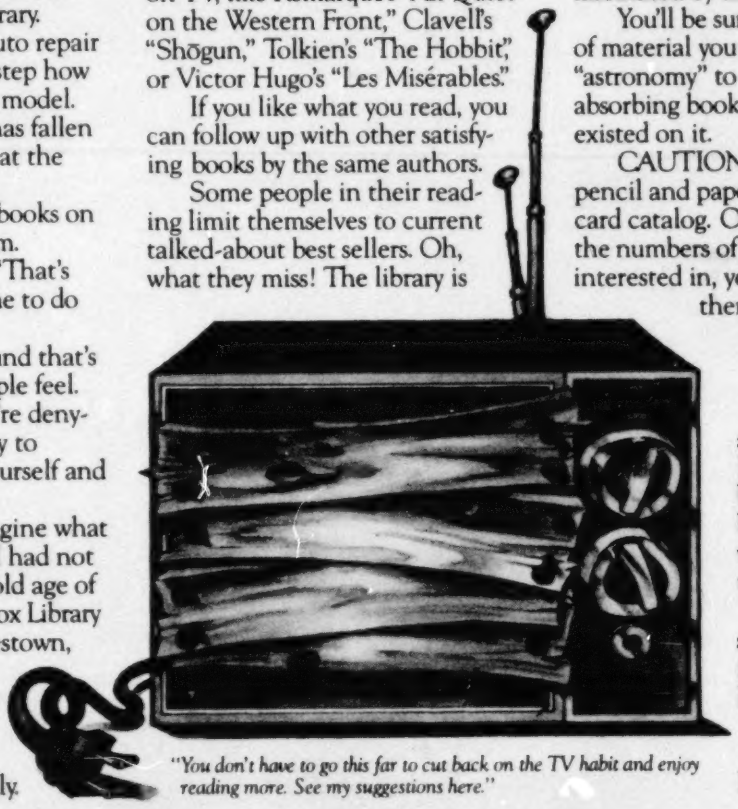
The card catalog lists every book in the library by:

1. author; 2. title; 3. subject.

Let's pick an interesting subject to look up. I have always been fascinated by astronomy.

You'll be surprised at the wealth of material you will find under "astronomy" to draw upon. And the absorbing books you didn't know existed on it.

CAUTION: Always have a pencil and paper when you use the card catalog. Once you jot down the numbers of the books you are interested in, you are ready to find them on the shelves.



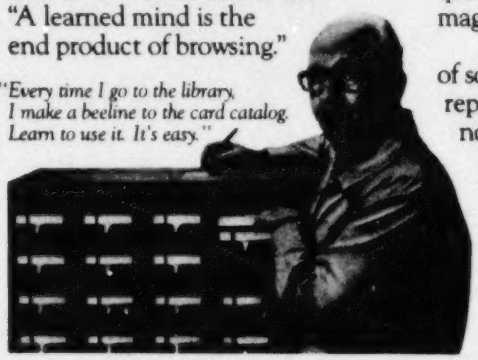
"You don't have to go this far to cut back on the TV habit and enjoy reading more. See my suggestions here."

Learn to use the stacks

Libraries call the shelves "the stacks." In many smaller libraries which you'll be using, the stacks will be open for you to browse.

To me there is a special thrill in tracking down the books I want in the stacks! For invariably, I find books about which I knew nothing, and

these often turn out to be the very ones I need. You will find the same thing happening to you when you start to browse in the stacks. "A learned mind is the end product of browsing."



"Every time I go to the library, I make a beeline to the card catalog. Learn to use it. It's easy."

CAUTION: If you take a book from the stacks to your work desk, do not try to return it to its proper place. That's work for the experts. If you replace it incorrectly, the next seeker won't be able to find it.

Learn to know the reference librarian

Some of the brightest and best informed men and women in America are the librarians who specialize in providing reference help.

Introduce yourself. State your problem. And be amazed at how much help you will receive.

CAUTION: Don't waste the time of this expert by asking silly questions you ought to solve yourself. Save the reference librarian for the really big ones.

Learn to use *The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*

This green-bound index is one of the most useful items in any library. It indexes all the articles in the major magazines, including newspaper magazine supplements.

Thus it provides a guide to the very latest expert information on any subject that interests you.

So if you want to do a really first-class job, find out which magazines your library subscribes to, then consult *The Reader's Guide* and track down recent articles on your subject. When you use this wonderful tool effectively, you show the mark of a real scholar.

Four personal hints

Since you can take most books home, but not magazines, take full notes when using the latter.

Many libraries today provide a reprographic machine that can quickly copy pages you need from magazines and books. Ask about it.

If you are working on a project of some size which will require repeated library visits, keep a small notebook in which you record the identification numbers of the books you will be using frequently. This will save you valuable time, because you won't have to consult the card catalog or search aimlessly through the stacks each time you visit for material you seek.

Some of the very best books in any library are the reference books, which may not be taken home. Learn what topics they cover and how best to use them, for these books are wonderful repositories of human knowledge.

Your business and legal advisor

Your library can give you help on *any* subject. It can even be your business and legal advisor.

How many times have you scratched your head over how to get a tax rebate on your summer job? You'll find answers in tax guides at the library. Thinking of buying or renting a house? You'll find guides to that. Want to defend yourself in traffic court? Find out how in legal books at the library.

Library projects can be fun—and rewarding

Here are a few ideas:

1. What are your roots? Trace your ancestors. Many libraries specialize in genealogy.

2. Did George Washington sleep nearby? Or Billy the Kid? Your library's collection of local history books can put you on the trail.

3. Cook a Polynesian feast. Or an ancient Roman banquet. Read how in the library's cookbooks.

4. Take up photography. Check the library for consumer reviews of cameras before you buy. Take out books on lighting, composition, or darkroom techniques.

Or—you name it!

If you haven't detected by now my enthusiasm for libraries, let me offer two personal notes.

I'm particularly pleased that in recent years two beautiful libraries have been named after me: a small community library in Quakertown,

"I discover all kinds of interesting books just by browsing in the stacks. I encourage you to browse."

Pennsylvania, and the huge research library located at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley.

And I like libraries so much that I married a librarian.

James A. Michener

Years ago, International Paper sponsored a series of advertisements, "Send me a man who reads," to help make Americans more aware of the value of reading.

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